



October 20, 2009

House Energy and Technology Committee
Lansing, Michigan 48912

Re: HB 5334 – Elimination of the Yard Waste Ban

Dear Representatives,

The Michigan Environmental Council was established in 1980 and is a coalition of environmental, public health and faith based groups from across Michigan. We have worked in a variety of areas including waste disposal and energy policy since our inception. This legislation involves the intersection of the two policy arenas and thus requires careful analysis.

We worked on the 1995 legislation that placed the ban on yard waste in Michigan. We supported the ban because first and foremost – yard waste is not trash. When properly handled, yard waste is good for the environment. That has not changed. Grass clippings if not collected and allowed to return to the lawn leads to a healthier lawn that needs less watering. Secondly, all yard waste when combined and composted creates a soil enhancement that can benefit gardens and green spaces around the home.

Landfills, on the other hand, are a source of toxic air pollutants, a potential risk to drinking water and can be a nuisance lowering the property value of nearby homes. Therefore, absent a clear showing of other benefits, the default should be to reject any policy that leads to the construction of more landfills in our communities.

To the contrary, this policy has other shortfalls, in that it will lead to job losses in the composting industry and investment losses by those who have financed expensive composting machinery.

Lastly, it appears that including yard waste into landfills would have the net impact of increasing greenhouse gases into our atmosphere, due to the creation of methane and the relatively low gas collection rate of landfills. The overall projected increase in renewable energy is small and made meaningless by the increase in greenhouse gases.

More greenhouse gases, more landfills and more layoff notices – three strikes. We urge members to oppose HB 5334.

Sincerely,

James Clift

Michigan Environmental Council, A Coalition of Organizations Protecting Michigan's People and the Environment

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